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MORNING IN THE WOODS.

IN some respects the early dawn of one summer morning is much like another; and save now and then when Jupiter Pluvius is in a watery temper, the charm and beauty and fragrance of early morning in the country are unvaried. It may be the opening of a day of soft gray cloud, or of splendid unbroken sunshine; but the first coming of the light is always a mystery of gracious and tender peace to all who have eyes and ears to discover and enjoy it.

See, the day begins to break,
And the light shoots like a streak
Of subtle fire; the wind blows cold,
As the morning doth unfold.
Now the birds begin to rouse,
And the squirrel from the boughs
Leaps, to get him nuts and fruit;
The early lark, that erst was mute,
Hails the dawning of the day
With many a trill and many a lay.

So sings an old and almost forgotten English poet, in a dainty little stanza as true to life as it is full of poetic and sparkling grace.

It is barely five o'clock on a fine August morning; come with me for half an hour, and ramble down this hillside, and see how true to life is the poet's picture. Once clear of the garden, we are out in the open road, great and busy enough in the old coaching days, but lonely now as a track through a New Zealand clearing. Far away on the dim horizon under that veil of silver mist is the cathedral city. Away to the left stretches mile after mile of rich green pasture and waving yellow corn; while all down the slope to the right runs a full league of tangled and shady woodland, into the hundred grassy roads of which it is easy enough to find a pleasant entrance, and often just as difficult to find your way out. Along the edge of the wood is a field of sainfoin still glowing here and there, after the sickle, with patches of crimson blossom. As we follow the winding path to the brow of the hill, we get the first taste of the keen crisp air, like a draught of

sparkling vintage. The dew lies thickly on the long rough grass and on the nut-bushes along the edge of the wood; and wavy streamers of shining gossamer are floating here and there in the soft sunshine, as if in search of a resting-place. All is very still as yet, the only sound being a faint whispering murmur from the clump of Scotch firs by the roadside, and the first joyous song of the lark which has just started up from her nest among the streaming grass. Watch her as she mounts up towards the sky, 'and ever singing wins her liquid way,' higher and higher still, by a series of rapid and irregular short ascents, until she dwindles to a mere speck, or is lost to sight. Presently, the whole air will be full of sweet sounds, as scattered over the wide fields other happy singers speed their flight to join in the happy chorus.

Meanwhile, here close at hand the partridge is calling to her young with a soft low whistle; blackbirds and thrushes are darting in and out of the thick hedgerow, now and then uttering a short quick cry of alarm; or, after a few notes of broken song, suddenly dashing down to the ground to seize on the hapless worm—which pays dearly for not going home till morning—and hurry back to their favourite bough. All at once, up start the whole covey of partridges with a loud whirring noise, not thoroughly frightened, but only to settle down again among some tangled grass and bramble a hundred yards away. There are fourteen of them altogether; most likely from the very nest which the keeper showed me a month or two ago just inside the fence of the next meadow; and a curious nest it was, in a snug corner under the shelter of the hedge. 'There!' said the keeper. 'Not much like a nest, is it?' I looked, and saw nothing but a roundish heap of tangled dry grass and leaves. This, however, he carefully lifted up, and underneath showed me a slight hollow scratched away in the earth, with a dozen or more of goodly eggs, snugly covered with grass. Both the old birds were away feeding, leaving their nursery for a short time so cleverly concealed that you might pass it a score of times without a

suspicion of what lay hidden under the pile of withered grass.

But now, we are on the very brow of the hill, and get a glimpse of the whole horizon. Far off to the south, above the faint blue distance, runs a broad band of amber light; above it, a long smooth layer of dark gray cloud; and above that a longer, keen shaft of delicate sea-green, which runs away into the extreme east, and is lost in a blaze of lemon, orange, and gold, amid a pile of dusky clouds, through which splinters of rosy light are stealing up over the broad expanse. In a few moments the sun himself will be fairly up, and hill and valley, mead, woodland, and stream will be crowned with touches of fiery splendour to welcome the golden dawn.

Turn aside by this winding path, and in two minutes we shall be in the deep shade of a grass road through the heart of the wood; with a thick growth of hazel, ash, spindle, and bramble on both sides of us, and here and there arching overhead. Here and there, too, among the thick underwood towers up a gnarled and twisted oak; or a still nobler beech, round which a goodly space has been cleared; for my lord, though mindful of pheasants, has an eye to solid timber, and in the next mile you may count a hundred forest trees of royal dimensions. After the fresh breeze of the hillside, the air seems cold and damp; and the moss under your feet is so thick that not a footstep can be heard. Tiny shafts of sunlight are stealing in here and there among the green leaves; a robin is in full song on the topmost bough of a copper beech; swarms of small birds, finches, tits, and fly-catchers, are all awake, and busily in search of breakfast. Far away, there is a faint sound of lowing kine, and the still fainter clarion of chanticleer, just let loose with his clucking wives into the lonely farmyard. Every now and then we stumble over the furrow of fresh brown earth, where Master Mole has been busy hours ago; and still oftener the burrow of a rabbit, outside the entrance of which Madam Bunny has carelessly left tufts of downy fur, of which some villainous stoat will not be slow to take advantage. And here, all at once in the green pathway we come upon a strange and unexpected find in the shape of a nut-brown Squirrel's Tail tipped with white. How, whence, and why it is there is a puzzle; but there it is, as you may see and feel for yourself. Our woods fairly swarm with these nimble mischievous imps, and I have often seen four or five of them at high-jinks round a single beech-tree, racing up the trunk, or flying from branch to branch with a mad haste and daring fun that must be seen to be credited.

But our green road suddenly ends in the open woodland, where half-a-dozen pathways branch away in every direction, and you may wander for an hour before you find your way home. The sun is fully out by this time, and the swallows are skimming swiftly across and across among clouds of flies, and especially round the old barn, on the door of which the keeper has nailed up a perfect host of what he calls 'varment': sparrow-hawks, weasels, crows, jays, magpies, and, alas and alack,

a splendid brown owl* with outspread wings—in *terrorem* for all poaching marauders that crawl, creep, and fly. And as good luck will have it, here comes the keeper himself, with brown leather gaiters half-way up his legs, a gun over his shoulder, and a grim sort of a smile on his ruddy sunburnt face as he sees us gazing at his museum.

'We were looking,' said I, 'at poor old Tu-whit, Tu-whoo! and wondering how he came to get here among the robbers.'

'He?' replies Gaiters. 'Why, he's as big a rogue as any one of 'em. Just you look now at his beak! Tell me that there bill weren't a-made to tear a bird's breast to bits? See!—all crooked, and sharp as a knife, just like an eagle he be. It stands to reason as he must be up to mischief. Reg'lar varment, I say, sir.'

After such a terrible indictment as this, it was useless to say a word in the prisoner's defence; but, as for 'standing to reason,' that was just where the sentence would not stand. If his name had been Corvus, the crow, the verdict would have been unanimous; it would be hard to find a craftier or greedier assassin. Nothing alive comes amiss to *him*—from the tiny callow fledgling that has tumbled out of the thrush's nest, to a partridge, or a dainty young rabbit, a young pheasant straying from the coop, or a chicken in a lonely farmyard, down to a tiny mouse in the furrow—no small creature is safe against that terrible pointed beak.

'You've been down through Blackwood, I see, gentlemen,' says the keeper. 'I know'd that squirl's tail in a jiffy. As I come home last night, sir, me and my boy, I knocked that squirl over up under the beech-tree; and when Sam went to pick him up, what does he do but nip his finger right into the bone! The boy lets go; and then, when he catches him by the tail, blest if it didn't come right off! and away goes Jack up the tree like a shot. But I shall mark him yet, some day, the nasty varment!'

'Poor wretch,' said I; 'he's marked enough already; and must be counted a regular Guy among his friends and relations—without a tail, and his jacket riddled with small-shot.'

But we must say good-morning to Mr Gaiters, and stroll slowly back through the grass road, which by this time is fairly checkered with patches of bright sun and shade. There are not many flowers in this dainty nook; but bees are out and busy among the wild thyme, which somehow or other has found its way in from the hedge; and still busier among the snowy blossom of the bramble, and the wild raspberry, which grows here in abundance. It is but six o'clock as we get back to the old dry sandy coach-road and stroll into the kitchen garden. Here, again, as you see, the whole place is alive with birds, among which, in spite of my love for them, I am bound to say there are many thieves, and chief among them all the impudent blackbird with his glossy coat and yellow beak. As a good rough wild songster, he is pleasant enough at early dawn, or at gray twilight in the hedgerow.

* Nothing will convince a keeper that poor old *Strix flammea* (the Barn Owl) is not a deadly foe to all game. Tell him that the owl lives almost entirely on mice—which eat the crops—that he kills mice and beetles by the hundred; his one answer is 'varment.'

But as a plunderer of gooseberries, currants, and cherries, his greediness is without bound, even when other food is abundant. In a single July morning a whole row of gooseberry bushes and our only cherry-tree (*Morellas*, too) were stripped bare by a couple of these sable rogues, in spite of all that could be done to warn them off. In a similar fashion, two noble mountain-ash trees in front of the house were stripped bare of their crimson glory in a few hours. The thrush is bad enough; but, hearken for one moment, and you will hear her in the very next pathway, beyond the raspberry bed. There is a favourite flint-stone there, half-buried in the gravel, to which she always comes at this time, after hunting for snails among the cabbages. The smaller ones she swallows whole, shells and all; the big ones she brings up to this stone, against which she nimbly dashes them, and soon makes a hearty breakfast, as a pile of broken shells clearly proves.

Of the blackbird one must say: '*Hic niger est, hunc tu Romane caveto.*' Keep him out of your fruit-garden—if you can; and it is not easy. But let your thrushes sing on in joyful peace. Their song is worth many a score of raspberries. Net all your fruit-trees; and don't grumble if a few choice bunches now and then disappear in spite of all nettings and of all gardeners' boys employed as scarecrows—perhaps because of these latter plagues. Never make war on the finches—chaf, green, or gold; nor against the merry tit-mouse big or little. Against every dozen morsels of ripe fruit or green young shoots which they carry off, must be set millions of the garden and flower-beds' worst plagues—slugs, worms, caterpillars, insects, grubs, and the eggs of a myriad of other pests, which, however lovely under the lens of a microscope, are simply detestable anywhere else but in a bird's mouth.

Whether the owner of a country garden shoots sparrows or not, seems to be a matter of little consequence; they increase and multiply at such a prolific rate, that, whether destroyed wholesale or simply let alone, their number seems unchanged.

THIS MORTAL COIL.

By GRANT ALLEN, AUTHOR OF 'IN ALL SHADES,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXX.—THE BARD IN HARNESS.

'I NEVER felt more astonished in my life,' Hatherley remarked one day some weeks later to a chosen circle at the Cheyne Row Club, 'than I felt on the very first morning of my visit to Whitestrand. Talk about being driven by a lady, indeed! Why, that frail little woman's got the Bard in harness, as right and as tight as if he were a respectable cheesemonger. It's too surprising. The Bard's done for. His life is finished. There the Man stops. The Husband and Father may drag out a wretched domestic existence yet for another twenty years. But the Man is dead, hopelessly dead. Julius Cæsar himself's not more utterly defunct. That girl has extinguished him.'

'Are there any children, then?' one of the chosen circle put in casually.

'Children! No. There was a child born just after old Mrs Meysey's death, I believe; but it died, and left the mother a poor wreck, her own miserable faded photograph. She was a nice little girl enough, in her small way, when she was here in town; amusing and sprightly; but the Bard has done for her, as she's done for the Bard. The fact is, this is a case of incompatibility of disposition. You can't stop three days at Whitestrand without feeling there's a skeleton in the house somewhere!'

The skeleton in the house, long carefully confined to its native cupboard, had indeed begun to perambulate the Hall in open daylight during the brief period of Hatherley's visit. He reached the newly remodelled home just in time to dress for dinner. When he descended to the ill-lighted drawing-room, five minutes late—Whitestrand could boast no native gas-supply, and candles are expensive—he gave his arm with a sense of solemn obligation to poor dark-clad Winifred. Mrs Mas-singer was indeed altered—sadly altered. Three painful losses in quick succession had told upon that slender pale young wife. She showed her paleness in her deep black dress: colours suited Winifred: in mourning, she was hardly even pretty. The little 'arrangement in pink and white' had faded almost into white alone: the pinkness had proved a fleeting pigment: she was not warranted fast colours. But Hatherley did his best with innate gallantry not to notice the change. Fresh from town, crammed with the last good things of the Cheyne Row and Mrs Bouverie Barton's Wednesday evenings, he tried hard with conscientious efforts to keep the conversation from flagging visibly. At first he succeeded with creditable skill; and Hugh, looking across at his wife with a curious smile, said in a tone of genuine pleasure: 'How delightful it is, after all, Winnie, to get a hold of somebody, direct from the real live world of London, in the midst of our fossilised antediluvian Whitestrand society!—I declare, Hatherley, it does one's heart good, like champagne, to listen to you. A breath of Bohemia blows across Suffolk the moment you arrive. Poor drowsy, somnolent, petrified Suffolk! "Silly Suffolk," even the aborigines themselves call it. It's catching, too. I'm almost beginning to fall asleep myself, by force of example.'

At the words, Winifred fired up in defence of her native county. 'I'm sure, Hugh,' she said with some asperity, 'I don't know why you're always trying to run down Suffolk! If you didn't like us, you should have avoided the shire; you should have carried your respected presence elsewhere. Suffolk never invited you to honour it with your suffrages. You came and settled here of your own free will. And who could be nicer or more cultivated, if it comes to that, than some of our Suffolk aborigines, as you call them? Dear old Mrs Walpole at the vicarage, for example.'

Hugh balanced an olive on the end of his fork. 'An amiable old Hecuba,' he answered provokingly. 'What's Hecuba to me, or I to Hecuba? Her latest dates are about the period of the siege of Troy, or, to be more precisely accurate, the year 1850.—My dear Hatherley, when you come down, I feel like a man who has breathed fresh air on some high mountain—'

stimulated and invigorated. You palpitate with actuality. Down here, we stagnate in the seventeenth century.'

Winifred bit her lip with vexation, but said nothing. It was evident the subject was an unpleasant one to her. But *she* at least would not trot out the skeleton.

Next morning Hugh showed Hatherley round the Whitestrand estate. Hatherley himself was not, to say the truth, in the best of humours. Mrs Massinger was dull and not what she used to be; she obviously resented his bright London gossip, as throwing into stronger and clearer relief the innate stupidity of her ancestral Suffolk. The breakfast was bad; the coffee sloppy; and the dishes suggested too obvious reminiscences of the joints and entrées at last night's dinner. Clearly, the Massingers were struggling hard to keep up appearances on an insufficient income. They were stretching their means much too thin. The Morris drawing-room was all very well in its way, of course; but tulip-pattern curtains and De Morgan pottery don't quite make up for a *réchauffé* of kidneys. Hatherley was an epicure, like most club-bred men, and his converse for the day took a colour from the breakfast table for good or for evil. So he started out that morning in a dormant ill-humour, prepared to tease and 'draw' Massinger, who had had the bad taste to desert Bohemia for dull respectability and ill-paid Squiredom in the wilds of Suffolk.

Hugh showed him first the region of the sandhills. The sandhills were a decent bit to begin with. 'Æolian sands!' Hatherley murmured contemplatively as Hugh mentioned the name. 'How very pretty! How very poetical! You can hardly regret it yourself, Massinger, this overwhelming of your salt marshes by the shifting sands, when you reflect at leisure it was really done by anything with so sweet an epithet as *Æolian*.'

'I thought so once,' Hugh answered dryly, with obvious distaste, 'when it was the property of my late respected father-in-law. But circumstances alter cases, you know, as somebody once remarked with luminous platitude; and since I came into the estate myself, to tell you the truth, I can't forgive the beastly sands, even though they happen to be called *Æolian*.'

They walked along in silence for a while, each absorbed in his own thoughts—Hatherley ruminating upon this melancholy spectacle of a degenerate son of dear old Cheyne Row gone wrong for ever: Massinger reflecting in his own mind upon the closer insight into the facts of life which property, with its cares and responsibilities, gives one—when he suddenly halted with a short sharp whistle at a turn of the path. 'Whew!' he cried; 'why, what the dickens is this? The poplar's disappeared—at least, its place, I mean.'

'Ah, yes! Mrs Massinger told me all about that unlucky poplar when you were gone last night,' Hatherley answered cheerfully. 'The only good object in the view, she said—and I can easily believe her, to judge by the remainder. It got struck by lightning one stormy night, and disappeared then and there entirely!'

'This is strange—very strange!' Hugh went on to himself, never heeding the babbling interruption. 'The sand's clearly collected on this side of late. There's a distinct hummock here, like

the ones at Grimes's.—I wonder what on earth these waves and mounds of sand can mean?—The wind's not going to attack this side of the river, too, is it?'

'Ah, Squire,' a man at work in the field put in, coming up to join them, and leaning upon his pitchfork—'ah 'm glad yo've come to see it yourself, naow. That's jest what it be. The sand's a-driftin'. Ah said to Tom, the night the thunderbolt took th' owd poplar—ah said: "Tom," says ah, "that there poplar were the only bar as stopped the river an' the sand from shifting. It's shifted all along till it's reached the poplar; an' naow it'll shift an' shift an' shift till it gets to Lowestoft or mayhap to Norwich."—An' if yo'll look, Squire, yo'll see for yourself—the river's achsally runnin' zackly where the tree had used to stand; an' the sand's a-driftin' an' a-driftin', same as it allays drift down yonner at Grimes's. An' it's my belief it'll never stop till it's swallowed up the Hall and the whole o' Whitestrand.'

Hugh Massinger gazed in silence at the spot where the Whitestrand poplar had once stood with an utter feeling of sinking helplessness taking possession at once of his heart and bosom. A single glance told him beyond doubt the man was right. The poplar had stood as the one frail barrier to the winds and waves of the German Ocean. He had burnt it down, by wile and guile, of deliberate intent, that night of the thunderstorm, to get rid of the single mute witness to Elsie's suicide. And now, his Nemesis had worked itself out. The sea was advancing, inch by inch, with irresistible march, against doomed Whitestrand.

Inch by inch! Nay, yard by yard. Gazing across to the opposite bank, and roughly measuring the distance with his eye, Hugh saw the river had been diverted northward many feet since he last visited the site of the poplar. He always avoided that hateful spot: the very interval that had elapsed since his last visit enabled him all the better to gauge at sight the distance the river had advanced meanwhile in its silent invasion.

'I must get an engineer to come down and see to this,' he said shortly. 'We must put up a breakwater ourselves, I suppose, since a supine administration refuses to help us.—I wonder who's the proper man to go to for breakwaters? I'd wire to town to-night, if I knew whom to wire to, and check the thing before it runs any farther.'

'What's that Swinburne says?' Hatherley asked musingly. 'I forget the exact run of the particular lines, but they occur somewhere in the *Hymn to Proserpine*:

Will ye bridle the deep sea with reins? will ye chasten
the high sea with rods?

Will ye take her to chain her with chains who is
older than all, ye gods?

I don't expect, my dear boy, your engineer will do much for you. Man's but a pigmy before these natural powers. A breakwater's helpless against the ceaseless dashing of the eternal sea.'

Hugh Massinger almost lost his temper—especially when he reflected with bitter self-abasement that those were the very lines he had quoted to Elsie—in his foolish pre-territorial days—about Mr Meysey's sensible proposals for obtaining an

injunction against the German Ocean. 'Eternal sea! Eternal fiddlesticks!' he answered testily. 'It's all very well for you to talk; but it's a matter of life and death to me.—We've got to build a breakwater, that's what it comes to. And a breakwater'll run into a pot of money.'

'Pity the old tree ever got burnt down, anyhow, to begin with,' Hatherley murmured low, endeavouring, now he had fairly drawn his man, to assume a sympathetic expression of countenance.

They walked back slowly to the Hall in silence, passing through the village out of pure habit. Hugh was evidently very much put out. Hatherley considered him even rude and bearish. A man should restrain himself before the faces of his guests. At the door, Hatherley strolled off round the garden walks and lit a cigar. Hugh went up to his own dressing-room.

The rest Hatherley never knew; he only knew that at dinner that night Mrs Massinger's eyes were red and sore with crying. For when Hugh reached his own room—that pretty little dressing-room with the pomegranate wall-paper and the pale blue Lahore hangings—he found Winifred fiddling at his private desk, a new tall black-walnut desk with endless drawers and niches and pigeon-holes. A sudden something rose in his throat as he saw her fumbling at the doors of the cabinet. Where had she found that carefully guarded key?—Aha, he knew! That fellow Hatherley!—Hatherley had taken a cigar from his case as they went out for their stroll together that luckless morning; and instead of returning the case to its owner, had laid it down in his careless way on the study table. He always kept the key concealed in the case.—Winifred must accidentally have found it, and tried to worm out her husband's secrets.—He hated such meanness in other people. How much, he wondered, had she found out now after all for her trouble?

Ah!

They both cried out in one voice together; for Winifred had opened a pigeon-hole box with the special key, and was looking intently with rigid eyes at—a small gold watch and a bundle of letters.

With a wild dart forward, Hugh tore them from her grasp and crunched them in his hand; but not before Winifred had seen two things: first, that the watch was a counterpart of her own—the very watch Hugh had given to Elsie Challoner; second, that the letters were in a familiar hand—no other hand than Elsie Challoner's.

She fronted him long with a pale cold face. Hugh took the watch and letters before her very eyes, and locked them up again in their pigeon-hole, angrily. 'So this is how you play the spy upon me!' he cried at last with supreme contempt in his voice and manner.

But Winifred simply answered nothing. She burst into a fierce wild flood of tears. 'I knew it!' she moaned in an agony of slighted affection. 'I knew it! I knew it!'

So, after all, in spite of her flight and her pretended coolness, Elsie was corresponding still with her husband! Cruel, cruel Elsie! Yet why had she given him back his watch again? That was more than Winifred could ever explain

in her simple philosophy. She could only cry and cry her eyes out.

CHAPTER XXXI.—COMING ROUND.

When Warren Relf steered back his barque to San Remo and Elsie that next autumn, he had not yet exactly been 'boomed,' as Edie had predicted; but his artistic or rather his business prospects had improved considerably through the intervening summer. Hatherley's persistent friendly notices of his work in the *Charing Cross Review*, and Mitchison's constant flow of rhapsodies about his 'charming morbidezza' in West-end drawing-rooms, had begun to bring his seapieces at last more prominently into notice. The skipper of the *Mud-Turtle* had gone up one. It was the mode to speak of him now in artistic coteries, no longer as a melancholy instance of well-meaning failure, but as a young man of rising though misunderstood talent. His knowledge of 'values' was allowed to be profound. To be sure, he didn't yet sell; but it was understood in astute buying circles that people who could pick up an early Relf dirt cheap and were prepared to hang on long enough to their purchase, would be sure in the end to see the colour of their money.

That winter at San Remo was the happiest Warren had yet passed there; for he began to perceive that Elsie was relenting. In a timid, tremulous, shamefaced, unacknowledged sort of way, she was learning little by little to love him. She would not confess it at first, even to herself. Elsie was too much of a woman to admit in the intimacy of her own heart, far less in the ear of any outside confidante, that having once loved Hugh she could now veer round and love Warren. The sense of personal consistency runs deep in women. They can't bear to turn their backs upon their dead selves, even though it be in order to rise to higher and ever higher planes of affection and devotion. Still, in spite of everything, Elsie Challoner grew by degrees dimly aware that she did actually love the quiet young marine painter. She had a hard struggle with herself, to be sure, before she could quite recognise the fact; but she recognised it at last, and in her own heart frankly admitted it. Warren was not indeed externally brilliant and vivid, like Hugh; he didn't sparkle with epigram and repartee. But while Hugh scintillated, Warren Relf's nature burned rather with a clear and steady flame. It was easy enough for anybody to admire Hugh; his strong points glittered in the eye of day: only those who dip a little below the surface ever reached the profounder depths of good and beauty that lay hid in such a mind as Warren's. Yet Elsie felt in her own soul it was a truer thing after all to love Warren than to love Hugh; a greater triumph to have won Warren's deep and earnest regard than to have impressed Hugh's fancy once with a selfish passion. She felt all that; but being a woman, of course she never acknowledged it. She went on fighting hard against her own heart, on behalf of the old dead worse love, and to the detriment of the new and living better one; and all the while she pretended to herself she was thereby displaying her profound affection and her noble consistency. She must never marry

Warren, whom she truly loved, and who truly loved her, for the sake of that Hugh who had never loved her, and whom she herself could never have loved had she only known him as he really was in all his mean and selfish inner nature. That may be foolish, but it's intensely womanly. We must take women as they are. They were made so at first, and all our philosophy will never mend it.

She couldn't endure that any one should imagine she had forgotten her love and her sorrow for Hugh. She couldn't endure, after her experience with Hugh, that any man should take her, thus helpless and penniless. If she'd been an heiress like Winifred, now, things might perhaps have been a little different; but to burden his struggling life still further, when she knew how little his art brought him, and how much he longed to earn an income for his mother and Edie to retire upon—that she couldn't bear to face for a moment. She would dismiss the subject; she would make him feel she could never be his; it was only tantalising poor kind-hearted Warren to keep him dangling about any longer.

'Elsie,' he said to her one day on the hills, as they strolled together, by olive and pinewood, among the asphodels and anemones, 'I had another letter from London this morning. The market's looking up. Benson has sold the "Rade de Villefranche."

'I'm so glad, Warren,' Elsie answered warmly. 'It's a sweet picture—one of your loveliest. Did you get a good price for it?'

'Forty guineas. That's not so bad as prices go. So I'm going to buy Edie that new dinner dress you and I were talking about. I know you won't mind running over to Mentone and choosing some nice stuff at the draper's there for me. Things are looking up. There's no doubt I'm rising in the English market. My current quotations improve daily. Benson says he sold that bit to a rich American. Americans, if you can once manage to catch them, are capital customers—"patrons," I suppose, one ought to say; but I decline to be patronised by a rich American. I think "customer," after all, a much truer and sincerer word—ten thousand times as manly and independent.'

'So I think too. I hate Patronage. It savours of flunkeydom; betrays the toadyism of fashionable art—the "Portrait-of-a-Gentleman" style of painting.—But oh, Warren, I'm so sorry the Rade's to be transported to America. It's such a graceful, delicate, dainty little picture. I quite loved it. To me that seems the most terrible part of all an artist's trials and troubles. After you've learned to know and to love it tenderly—after it's become to you something like your own child—an offspring of your inmost and deepest nature—you sell it away for prompt cash to a rich American, who'll hang it up in his brand-new drawing-room at St Louis or Chicago between two horrid daubs by fashionable London or Paris painters, and who'll say to his friends with a smile after dinner: "Yes, that's a pretty little thing enough in its way, that tiny sea-piece there. I gave forty guineas in England for that: it's by Relf of London.—But observe this splendid "Cleopatra" over here, just above the sideboard: she's a real So-and-so"—torture itself will not induce the present chronicler to name the particular painter

of fashionable nudities whom Elsie thus pilloried on the scaffold of her high disdain—"I paid for that, sir, a cool twenty thousand dollars!"'

Warren smiled a smile of thrilling pleasure, and investigated his boots with shy timidity. Such sympathy from her outweighed a round dozen of American purchasers. 'Thank you, Elsie,' he said simply. 'That's quite true. I've felt it myself.—But still, in the end, all good work, if it's really good, will appeal somehow, at some time, to somebody, somewhere. I confess I often envy authors in that. Their finished work is impressed upon a thousand copies, and scattered broadcast over all the world. Sooner or later it's pretty sure to meet the eyes of most among those who are capable of appreciating it.—But a painting is a much more monopolist product. If the wrong man happens at first to buy it and to carry it into the wholly wrong society, the painter may feel for the moment his work is lost, and his time thrown away, so far as any direct appreciation or loving sympathy with his idea is concerned.—Still, Elsie, it gets its reward in due time. When we're all dead and gone, some soul will look upon the picture and be glad. And it's a great thing to have sold the Rade, anyway, because of the dear old Mater and Edie.—I'm able to do a great deal more for them now; I hope I shall soon be in a position to keep them comfortably.—And do you know, somehow, these last few years—I'm ashamed to say it, but it's the fact none the less—I've begun to feel a sort of nascent desire to be successful, Elsie.'

Elsie dropped her voice a tone lower. 'I'm sorry for that, Warren,' she answered shyly.

'Why so?'

Elsie dissimulated. 'Because one of the things I most admired about you when I first knew you was your sturdy desire to do good work for its own sake, and to leave success to take care of itself in the dim background.'

'But, Elsie, I've many more reasons now to wish for success.—You know why—I've never told you, but I begin to hope—I've ventured to hope the last few months—I know it's presumptuous of me, but still I hope—that when I can earn enough to make a wife happy'—

Elsie stopped dead short at once on the narrow path that wound in and out among the clambering pine-woods, and fronting him full, with her parasol planted firmly on the ground, cut him off in a desperately resolute tone: 'Warren, if I wouldn't marry you unsuccessful, you may be quite sure success at any rate would never, never induce me to marry you.'

It was the first time in all her life she had said a single word about marriage before him, and Warren therefore at once accepted it, paradoxically but rightly, as a good omen. 'Then you love me, Elsie?' he cried, all trembling.

Elsie's heart fluttered with painful tremors. 'Don't ask me, Warren!' she murmured, thrilling. 'Don't make me say so.—Don't worm it out of me!—Dear Warren, you know I like you dearly. I feel and have always felt towards you like a sister. After all I've suffered, don't torture me more.—I can never, never, never marry you!'

'But you do love me, Elsie?'

Elsie's eyes fell irresolute to the ground. It was a hard fight between love and pride. But

Warren's pleading face conquered in the end. 'I do love you, Warren,' she answered simply.

'Then I don't mind the rest,' Warren cried with a joyous burst, seizing her hand in his. 'If you love me, Elsie, I can wait for ever. Success or no success, marriage or no marriage, I can wait for ever. I only want to know you love me.'

'You will have to wait for ever,' Elsie answered low. 'You have made me say the word, and in spite of myself I have said it. I love you, Warren, but I can never, never marry you!'

'And I say,' Edie Relf remarked with much incisiveness, when Elsie told her bit by bit the whole story that same evening at the Villa Rossa, 'that you treated him very shabbily indeed, and that Warren's a great deal too good and kind and sweet to you. Some girls don't know when they're well off. Warren's a brick—that's what I call him.'

'That's what I call him too,' Elsie answered, half tearful. 'At least I would, if brick was a word I ever applied to anybody anywhere. But still—I can never marry him!'

'Thank goodness,' Edie said, with a jerk of her head, 'I wasn't born romantic and hysterical. Whenever any nice good fellow that I can really like swims into my ken and asks me to marry him—which unfortunately none of the nice good fellows of my acquaintance show the slightest inclination at present to do—I shall answer him promptly, like a bird—Arthur, or Thomas, or Guy, or Walter, or Reginald, or whatever else his nice good name may happen to be—Mr Hatherley's is Arthur—and proceed at once to make him happy for ever. But some people seem to prefer tantalising them. For my own part, my dear, I've a distinct preference for making men happy whenever possible. I was born to make a good man happy, and I'd make him happy with the greatest pleasure in life, if only the good man would recognise my abilities for the production of happiness, and give me the desired opportunity for translating my benevolent wishes towards him into actual practice. But good men are painfully scarce nowadays. They don't swarm. They retire bashfully. Very few of them seem to float by accident in their gay shallops towards the port of San Remo.'

SCOTCH BANKING AS A PROFESSION.

OFFICIALS.

THE ordinary definition of an official, as understood by the banks, is an officer who is authorised to sign official documents on behalf of the bank with which he is connected. Before entering into the official domain, it may be proper to state that there is a sort of intermediate class who occupy a position midway between clerks and officials. These are the Inspectors. When an inspecting bank officer is on his rounds overhauling branch-work, he is an official representing his bank; but when he returns to the head office, his rôle of representative ceases, and he then partakes more of the character of a clerk. There is no department of the bank more important than this audit or inspecting department, which takes account of the whole *personnel* and *matériel* of every

branch of the bank. Nothing is out of its purview, and it sees that the policy of the bank is given effect to; for it is policy, as Lord Beaconsfield once observed, that shapes expenditure. The inspecting officers are the *corps d'élite* of the bank's staff; and no better field for training bankers can be found than in that department. A single statement will suffice to show this. Within the past twenty years no fewer than five managers of Scotch and English banks have been furnished by the inspecting officers of one bank alone, irrespective of the agencies and other posts which have been supplied from the same source. This will give some idea of the value of an inspector's experience in fitting and qualifying him for filling the higher posts of the bank.

Coming now to the subject of officials, it will give some idea of the number engaged in Scotch banks if we state that at present there are nine hundred and sixty-four offices connected with these banks, including their London offices. This number implies a corresponding number of agents, the title 'manager' being usually confined to Glasgow, Edinburgh, and London offices, or to places where the title has been acquired through the absorption of another and a smaller bank. The next numerous class of officials are the accountants, who rank as a rule next to the agent, and, like him, subscribe documents on behalf of the bank. Then follow the officials at the large branches, and the head-office official staff, of whom the General Manager is the head.

As the branch Accountants form the lowest grade in the official organisation, we shall first speak of them. Their function is that of taking care of the book-keeping at the branch and seeing that all the entries are correctly made. In addition, they are held responsible for the accuracy of the branch returns, which are designed to keep a branch *en rapport* with its head office. The accountant has also charge of the pass-books, which record the dealings of a bank with its customers. When any mistake in the books arises, it is his duty to find it out and rectify it. One of the banks has adopted the system of having accountants at its various offices; while the other banks have but a handful in the entire establishment. The number of these officials might be computed at under two hundred in all.

Advancing to a higher grade, we shall now deal with the most numerous class—the Agents—by defining their duties. These are necessarily determined by the demands of the district in which their office is situated; for the places range from a population of seven hundred and seventy-one—where, it may be mentioned, there are two bank offices—to cities of the magnitude of Glasgow and London. The variety is not only as to the extent of a district, but also as to its productive powers and commercial and agricultural value.

It is always an object of ambition with a bank clerk to become an agent, no matter how small the place. Bank agents have, however, no sinecure in the matter of responsibility, as they are held liable for a certain proportion of the losses which they make on advances, this obligation being defined in the bond which each signs as agent. These losses are sometimes

exacted from agents; but everything depends on the attendant circumstances and the view which is taken by the management of the case. The liability therefore is held *in terrorem* over them. If an agent persists in extending accommodation to his customers contrary to the bank's express instructions, he would be a likely subject for coming within the scope of this rule.

Agents, from their position, have much public trust reposed in them. This leads to their being frequently consulted on matters of business unconnected with the bank, such as investments and the like. Some agents have given advice on such topics, telling what investments should be cultivated, the result being that money has often been lost, particularly in new concerns which have come to grief. It is flattering to have one's opinion asked and to be regarded as an authority, but experience demonstrates the danger of giving advice in money matters, on the issue of which so much depends, and over which so much proverbial uncertainty hangs. It is more prudent to give information only of facts within one's knowledge, and allow the questioner to judge what course should thereafter be followed.

The qualities demanded of an agent are caution, shrewdness, honesty, tact, and attention to duty. Brilliant cleverness is not needed; only a certain amount of knowledge in dealing with figures and with men. An old Highlandman, who was alike provost of a town and agent for a bank, was noted for his pawky tact in disposing of needy applicants for the bank's money. One day a worthy, in whose company he had passed some convivial hours the night preceding, called on him and presented for discount a bill for a small amount, on the strength of the previous evening's conviviality. The pawky Celt coolly regarded the document, and handed it back with the words: 'I canna do't, Charles.—How's your father?' On another occasion, the provost had a bill handed to him by an equally impecunious party. Taking the instrument of debt in his hands, he observed that it was dated a month back, this date being intended to convey the idea that the bill had been kept a whole month without the holder's being necessitated to turn it into cash. Turning to the intending discounter, he said: 'The ink's no dry, man, and'—*pooh!* (blowing the bill away)—'it's a' wind thegither.' A wind-bill means a bill for which no value has been given.

These illustrations serve to show how prompt an agent should be to say no. He must also learn to say it agreeably, for the manner in which a refusal is given goes a long way towards mitigating its severity and breaking its force. He is a real banking diplomatist who can succeed in this.

Agents have to report to their head office on the standing and sufficiency of obligants to the bank, and great firmness is frequently required in dealing with unsecured or doubtful advances. Many individuals consider they are entitled to get from a bank whatever they demand; and that, as there are many partners in a bank, the loss to each must be infinitesimal so far as these individuals' losses are concerned. Some also hold it to be no sin to rob a corporation; and it undoubtedly adds to the difficulties of an agent when he has to deal with persons who have not

the moral perception to see that even a corporation should have the sums it lends refunded to it.

In the appointment of agents, a bank has regard to the wants of each district. A local residenter often obtains a new agency where there is no sufficiently established business, or where a bank must work up from a connection that can only be formed by one who knows the district thoroughly. Hence we see bank agencies filled occasionally by lawyers and factors, or other equally influential members of society who are possessed of interest which they can exert in favour of the bank. It is reckoned that between one-third and one-fourth of the agencies in the banks are filled by agents drawn from the non-banking classes, of whom lawyers form by far the greatest part. These agencies, which require so much fostering local care, are mainly of the smaller order, for untrained bankers could not well carry on the business of the larger branches.

As regards the remuneration of agents, it has been the practice in many cases to allow a commission on the increase in the percentage of deposits over a certain amount, in addition to a fixed salary. This is intended to act as an incentive to the ingathering of deposits, and with a view to quicken the agent's personal zeal for the welfare of the bank. At some branches, payment is made in a fixed salary alone. Agents are allowed house accommodation with minor allowances as may be agreed on, and they have to furnish a guarantee of several thousands for their intromissions.

Promotion from one agency to another depends on the success which attends an agent in his branch management. Some agencies are more easily managed than others, from their being reservoirs for deposits rather than outlets for loans; but as to this much depends on the district. The advances, too, are in some places normal and safe in character, while in others they are precarious from the nature of things. For example, the weather is so uncertain, that the agricultural and fishing industries cannot work so steadily as those which move under less precarious conditions. Foreign prices intervene too; and being factors in the case, affect adversely, as a rule, home interests. There have been cases, happily not common, in which bankers have had to confront forgeries. These occur sometimes when strong pressure is put on obligants to find security for their advances.

There are agents who have been taken into the service owing to the business ability they have displayed in other lines of life. An agent, again, who possesses what is termed a good manner, and who has a pleasing way with ladies, may obtain promotion for these reasons, being thus well adapted for the management of a large deposit business. Glancing at two large agents, or managers as they are called—one in London, the other in Glasgow—we shall find them safeguarding interests represented by several millions of pounds; in fact, between them the greater part of the bank's disposable means. These branch managers enjoy ample discretion in the conduct of the bank's business, tempered by careful supervision. Each ways what is practically an *imperium in imperio*. What tests the discernment and power of decision of agents and managers is the demands

made on them at short notice for temporary unsecured advances. Although these requests are made by men reputed to be wealthy, yet circumstances so change, that it is always a matter of risk to give such advances, which are, moreover, against rule. Yet to every rule there are exceptions, and so a banker must run some risk or lose his customer. Or his clients may be solvent, but may become involved in losses through the bills they have drawn on other people not being met, and thus be compelled to suspend payment. Although a bank is supposed to exact security for the loans it makes, it reckons with loss, and takes it into account in all its calculations, as it has not yet reached the standard of an exact science.

We shall now consider the various offices connected with the body who constitute the official staff of a bank's Head Office. First, the Accountant. His duties are to supervise the work of the staff in his department, and to be responsible for the book-keeping of the bank as expressed in the branch bank returns and the books of the head office. He prepares the statement of the assets and liabilities, and performs the feat called striking profits. In former days, the accountant, or accountant as he was then designated, held office next to the manager of the bank; but the secretary gradually dislodged him from his post, and thus their relative positions have been reversed. The office of accountant is a very onerous one, for the accuracy of all the books and of the staff over whom he presides is dependent on him. The importance of his position was established recently during a notable banking trial. It was then shown that the secretary knew nothing of the concocted statements of the bank's affairs, while the accountant was entirely cognisant of them, he having been a party to the fraudulent alteration of the figures which appeared in the published balance sheets of the bank.

The Cashier's duties lie almost entirely with the cash. He is responsible for the accuracy of the cash in the tellers' hands and in the cash-safe of the bank. He counts all the reserve money, and acts as custodian of the main portion of the keys of the bank's coffers. The safeguarding of the note circulation to meet the requirements of the Peel Act with respect to providing coin for all excess over the authorised issue, is also entrusted to him. The cashier has likewise under his care all the securities and articles of value deposited with his bank for safe keeping. His is the duty, also, of occupying the premises above the bank, so that he shall be within call in any case of emergency. Some cashiers feel the burden of this duty weigh heavily upon them. It is told of a cashier that, on hearing the least noise at night, he would get up out of bed and perambulate the long corridors of the bank house, clad in his night garment, a naked sword in the one hand, and a lantern in the other. He could not sleep until he had reassured himself that the noise he had heard proceeded from satisfactory and explicable causes.

The office of Inspector or Superintendent of Branches is a very important one, if we bear in mind that he is also the head of the inspecting department, to which allusion has already been made. He has the care of all the members of the branch staff, and full reports of the capabilities of each are sent to him. He has the power of

recommending changes and nominating subordinates for the different vacancies that arise from time to time at the branches. Reports on obligants also reach him; and the history of all loans and borrowers' circumstances are carefully laid aside in his pigeon-holes. It is he who sets the machinery at work for overtaking the inspection of the head office and branches, the work of which is done with much more celerity now than in the olden times, when a week or ten days were devoted to the inspection of a single small branch. So thorough was the inspection, that an inspector was once, it is said, called back 'to count the wafers!' Inspections are meant to descend now on branches like bolts from the blue, or like an eagle's sudden swoop, and they are thus more numerous than formerly.

The Secretary of a bank ranks in dignity next to the manager. His duties are varied, and one of them is to act occasionally in room of the manager during the absence of the latter. He carries on that part of the bank's correspondence which is of special value, and is other than routine. It was once stated in a civil case by a secretary that his duty was to submit to his Directors applications for advances, and that he only placed before them those which had any chance of being granted. He attends all meetings of the Board of Directors, prepares the minutes recording the business done, and aids the Directors generally in their deliberations.

We now come to the principal banking functionary, variously termed Treasurer, Cashier, General Manager, and Manager. Of the Scotch bank managers, two only are not trained bankers, one having been a lawyer, and the other an accountant. This circumstance has been no bar to their banking success, and they are also both able literary exponents of banking theory and practice. It would not be easy to define all the duties of a bank manager, but an attempt may be made to state at least the most important of them. He has, subject always to the will of the Directors, the supreme control over the lending and investing of the entire bank's means. All appointments may be said to emanate from him; he judges what is for the best interests of the bank, and decides accordingly. Some managers abide by the recommendations of their departmental chiefs; others prefer to act autocratically in all the appointments they make.

The manager is the real inspirer of the bank's policy, and it must be admitted that he occupies an unexceptionable position for obtaining knowledge of everything which he had needs know. Loaded as he is with so much responsibility in the disposing of interests so vast, there is this in his favour, that he does not incur one farthing of personal liability, such as agents have to bear, by any act of his when he is lending out to the best of his ability the bank's disposable means. The manager has to receive many persons every day, one of his duties being to listen to applications of all kinds, sometimes on the part of officers for additional salary, for vacant posts, &c. He has also to attend to complaints, and when necessary, administer rebukes to subordinates in connection with matters of discipline. He has to keep himself abreast of everything in the world of finance, in markets, stocks, prices, trade operations, and commercial and agricultural doings. The reports

of his inspectors form a fitting study for his evening leisure hours, and furnish him with food for reflection in observing the progress or declension of a branch. He has also to meet periodically with the managers of the other banks, to fix bank rates of interest, and to arrive at an agreement upon disputed or doubtful points in banking practice.

The last matter which we need touch on is the important one of estimating losses, with a view to arriving at honestly earned profits. It is of course impossible to know what tax is thus placed on the powers of casuistry of bank managers; but they seem to perform their part well, if we may judge by the confidence which the public repose in them. The post of bank manager is an extremely important one, and the holder of it is eminently in a situation from which he can exercise an important and salutary influence on the trade and commerce of the country.

THE SILVER STREAM.

AN IDYL OF THE WYE.

BY FRED. M. WHITE.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAP. I.

As the shadows began to lengthen over Belmont—for the cathedral chimes floating along the bosom of the waters proclaimed the seventh hour—a long outrigger gig pair flashed round the point into the level stretch of dead pool reaching right away to the Wye Bridge. There was a pleasant smell of flowers lying upon the sweet August air, a lowing of cattle, a reflection of many boats in the track as the gig, propelled by four muscular arms, slid on towards the town. There were only two men in the narrow craft; and as they were double sculling, with long clean sweep, making a musical click of oars in the rowlocks, there was not much opportunity for conversation. The 'stroke,' a young fellow with clear gray eyes and pleasant face, was clad in a suit of plain white flannels; and perched upon the back of his head was a light-blue cap—the badge of distinction sacred to those only who have fought for the honour of the 'Varsity against their rivals from the twin seat of learning, Oxford. Egbert—or as his familiars called him—Bertie Trevor, the stroke in question, had rowed 'four' in that year's Cambridge boat, and now, with his friend Frederick Denton, was making a Wye boating tour from Hay to Chepstow. Denton, a somewhat older man, sported the light-blue and black of Caius College. He was not a blue, for two reasons: first, because the severe training was not to his taste; and secondly, a restless ambition and the result dependent upon a successful university career had left him no time for such a serious and practical business. A hard-working college tutor has no time for the toil of pleasure.

They pulled on with regular sweeping rhythm till they were almost within the bridge-shadows. An arrowy craft bearing a town four rushed by with clean sweep and swirl up-stream, a little knot of admirers running along the bank in the wake of a flannel-clad youth who was bent upon exer-

cising an extraordinary ingenuity for giving each of the unhappy crew the most apparently contradictory directions. As they sped swiftly by, Denton paused in his stroke and looked over his shoulder at the thin line, like a gigantic spider, fading in the golden track.

'That is what some people call pleasure,' he observed—'sacrificing a perfect summer evening for the satisfaction of sitting in a confined space for two hours to be bullied by an implacable miscreant called a coach. Depend upon it, if it was called work, they wouldn't get a man to turn out.'

'I like their stroke,' Trevor replied. 'Well marked and lively, and the last ounce pulled out.—What a grand stretch of water this is, Denton!—two miles without a curve, and room for at least five eights. If we only had such a river at Cambridge!'

A few more strokes and the landing-stage was reached. A bronzed waterman, with visage tanned to the colour of Spanish mahogany, awaited them on the barge: old 'Dick' Jordan, with his solitary keen eye and everlasting pipe, best of men and bravest of watermen, as every rowing man on the Wye can tell. He looked up into the fading blue sky and prophesied, after the manner of his kind, a fair day on the morrow.

'What time be you gentlemen going to start in the morning?' he asked, addressing Trevor, whose light-blue cap he had immediately spotted.

Trevor turned to his friend and asked what hour it was to be.

'It depends altogether upon Phil, you know. He may get here to-night, or not till to-morrow afternoon.—We must leave it open, Dick. Only, you had better have everything ready by ten o'clock.'

The two friends strolled together over the old stone bridge, below which lay the cathedral and bishop's palace, with the trim cloister gardens sloping down to the water-side. The clean city lay very quiet in the evening. As they passed through the close, under an avenue of ancient elms, there was a clamour of rooks in the feathery branches, clear cut against the sky. Turning into Castle Street, Denton came to a house at length, the door of which he opened with a latchkey; for the twain had deemed it best to take a lodging, instead of availing themselves of the accommodation of the *Green Dragon*. In the hall were two small portmanteaus, bearing the monogram P. D. in neat black letters. Denton's face lighted with pleasure. In the joint sitting-room up-stairs there were the remains of a meal, as if some one had recently partaken of refreshment; and on the table a card, upon which were written the words, 'Back in half an hour.'

But the appointed time went on, and the expected guest had not reappeared. Tea had been disposed of; the windows were thrown open, and our friends sat over their pipes, looking out upon the Castle Green, where the world of Hereford was taking its pleasure in the cool summer evening.

'I wonder what has become of Decie?' Trevor observed. 'It's nearly nine o'clock.'

'I hope he isn't going to make an ass of himself as he did in the Easter "Vac,"' Denton said practically. 'You never saw such a wet blanket; and a fellow who had just come into a clear

three thousand a year, too! And twelve months ago there wasn't a cheerier, happier man in the 'Varsity.'

Trevor pulled at his pipe a few moments in reflective silence. 'I noticed the change when we were at Cookham together at the commencement of this "long." Colden had a houseboat there with a lot of people in the party; and when Dixon and I agreed to join, Phil cut it. After agreeing to join, too! Miss Rashleigh was one of them; and, between ourselves, Decie would have jumped at the chance of meeting her once.'

'Oh, Miss Rashleigh was there!' Denton replied reflectively. 'My dear Bertie, did it ever strike you that that was the very reason why Phil threw over Colden at the last moment? I daresay you won't believe me, but it is the fact nevertheless.'

'We used to think Phil would have married her.'

'We were not the only people who thought so: anyway, there was something between them. She is a nice girl; and I dare swear that if anything was wrong, it wasn't her fault. Phil was poor enough then; but she liked him better than any of us, all the same. Everything seemed to go smoothly enough, till that unpleasant affair over the diamond bracelet.'

'I never heard of it,' said Trevor. 'Where was that?'

'Well, perhaps I ought not to mention it; but I was under the impression you knew. It was during the May races last year—you didn't keep that term I recollect now. And they were all up there—Colonel Scobell and his family, with Miss Rashleigh, who is his niece, you know.—I was all the more put out because the affair happened in my rooms. The Scobells had been very kind to Decie the "long" before, and nothing would do but he must give them a lunch; and my rooms, being some of the best in the college, were borrowed for the purpose. Miss Rashleigh's diamond bracelet, the last thing her mother gave her before she died, was lost.'

'Seems strange to lose a thing like that in a man's rooms.'

'Precisely—that is the most unpleasant part of it. It was only laid down for a moment in an inner apartment; and when Miss Rashleigh went in, it was gone. No servant had been there—no one but Decie and Gerard Rashleigh, her brother, you know.—Anyway, it was never found.'

'What do you make of it?' Trevor asked cautiously. 'Valuable trinkets like that don't disappear without aid. Still, at the same time, it would be absurd to dream of Phil having a hand in it.'

Denton watched the smoke curling round his head for a few minutes. His next words startled Bertie out of his philosophic calm: 'We shouldn't; but there is no doubt Miss Rashleigh did—and does.'

'My dear Fred, you rave! Philip Decie would cut off his right hand first. Besides, with all his money'—

'Now, see how rash youth rushes to conclusions.—How long is it since Philip's uncle died and left him a fortune?—Five months. And up to that time, if you had searched the university

of Cambridge through, you would not have found a poorer undergraduate than Decie.'

'But surely you don't think'—

'Of course I don't; and if you suggest such a thing, I shall assault and batter you in the first degree. But I know a little more about women than you; and, to put it harshly, I have a strong suspicion that Miss Rashleigh entertains the enlightened idea that Phil stole her bracelet.'

'Only shows the sagacity of some women,' returned the enlightened philosopher of twenty-three sapiently.—'Why, I would trust my life to old Phil.—Great Scott! Denton, fancy any one—any one being idiot enough to believe that Decie could do such a blackguardly thing!'

Bertie laid aside his pipe in disgust, and regarded Hereford's innocent citizens below as if they, with the rest of mankind, had done him a personal and irretrievable injury. But any reply of Denton's was prevented by the entrance of the maligned hero in question. There was nothing in either air or manner to denote the blighted swain. Decie presented a picture of the typical Englishman of twenty-five as he appears under the advantages conferred upon most young men by a liberal education, and an acquaintance with the refinements and amenities of life in the upper middle classes. Like the others, he was clad in flannels and boating jacket, the distinguishing badge of a Trinity man. With the exception of a half-melancholy smile and a certain sombre light in the dark eyes, sorrow or care had laid a light hand upon him.

'I am sorry to have kept you waiting,' said he, after the first greeting; 'but the fact is I strolled into the *Dragon* billiard-room, and the first man I saw there was Du Maurier.'

Denton coughed dryly, a sternutation which might have meant anything, but which, as both Decie and Trevor were aware, simply denoted Denton's dislike of the individual in question. 'What brings that desirable youth in these parts?' he asked. 'I thought he usually spent his vacation at Monaco or Monte Carlo, where fools with more money than brains most do congregate.'

'Appears he is staying in the neighbourhood,' Decie answered briefly. 'Some friend who has taken a house down the river. The Frenchman is not communicative, and I didn't press him, you may be sure.'

'Well, it doesn't matter.—And now, anent to-morrow. I suppose there is no reason why we shouldn't start at nine o'clock?'

Phil nodded, without taking his pipe from his mouth. It was all one to him what time they started, for, sooth to say, his first enthusiasm in the trip had vanished, and he felt in no mood for discussing details which once upon a time would have been a source of interest and pleasure. Moreover, the meeting with Du Maurier—a fascinating Gaul, who had, for certain diplomatic reasons, deemed it advisable to become a Cambridge undergraduate—had aroused within him the rankling soreness of an old wound, which he flattered himself had long since entirely healed. In spite of Denton's brusqueness and apparent want of feeling, he was naturally of a tender sympathetic disposition, and refrained from rallying Phil upon his preoccupation, a want of attention for which the latter was truly grateful.

So, upon the whole, the long-expected meeting could not be pronounced a brilliant success.

But when morning dawned, with a fair blue sky and a gentle breeze rippling in the immemorial elms, it was not in the elastic and buoyant nature of youth in the twenties to preserve the grave decorum of misanthropy. The gig, provided with a pair of long light oars, and short pole for stream-work, lay alongside the barge, her bows filled with multitudinous packages, and covered with a waterproof sheet calculated to afford a haven of shelter at nights. A few minutes past ten they swung round, shooting the pointed stone arches, floating past the palace and cloister gardens, down the rippling stream, with the fair meadows sloping towards the valley lying in the bosom of a ring of purple hills. Gradually they slid down in the beautiful morning, along by fair homesteads and quaint gabled farmhouses, through silent pools where the blue flash of the kingfishers darted in zigzag flight, or over broad rippling streams where the salmon nets hung drying on the willows. Decie and Trevor were rowing; Denton lounging in the sternsheets, smoking lazily, or making humorous remarks upon the fishermen as they passed.

'Every man has a vocation in life,' he observed sententiously, 'though fate so often ordains a round peg for a square hole. If I hadn't been a hard-working university coach, I should have made a perfect loafer.'

'To see you now, any one would think you were the idlest man under the sun,' Bertie returned between the strokes; 'and yet you profess to despise affectation. There isn't a more ambitious fellow in Cambridge than you.'

'I don't know about that, though. It runs in too many grooves. There is Barton, of Jesus, with a sole ambition to get his boat head of the river again; Moffat, my old tutor, who is wild to become Professor of some ology at Trinity; or young Rashleigh, the cleverest pupil I ever had, whose ambition seems to be to get to the dogs in the shortest possible space of time.—You remember him, Phil?'

Phil, pulling bow-oar, with his face hidden from the speaker, flushed with something more than the exertion he was undergoing, replied through his set teeth that he did. And, considering that the youth in question was only brother to the particular star of poor Phil's slighted devotion, it is only too palpable that he spoke the truth.

'I have not seen him for a long while,' he continued, fearful, with all the painful self-consciousness of a lover, that his silence would be read and misconstrued. 'We—we used to be rather thick, you know. I—I have rather fancied that for the last term or two he has fought shy of me.'

'He seemed to have drifted into a precious bad set,' said Bertie, with all an athlete's contempt for the venial sins of college life.—'Everton and Leslie, and the card-playing, tandem-driving division. Of course, it is no business of mine; but knowing a little of Rashleigh's financial affairs, I don't see how it can last.'

'It won't last,' Denton returned. 'There will be a scandal some of these days, and exit Gerard Rashleigh and a few others who shall be nameless. And yet,' continued the speaker regretfully, 'it's a pity, a great pity—a lad like that with good feelings and generous instincts, only wanting

a kind, firm guide to turn out a credit to himself and his college.'

'You are altogether mistaken, Denton. Young as he is, Rashleigh is a hardened, unscrupulous scoundrel.'

Denton propped himself upon his elbow so that he could get a better glance at the speaker's face. Phil's eyes were glowing with passion, every feature blazing with indignation. As his glance fell upon Denton's amazed countenance, he checked himself with a visible effort and bit his lip.

'Now, that is the sort of house I should like to call mine,' said the steersman, with an abrupt change in the conversation, as he indicated a noble-looking residence rising out of a belt of trees upon an abrupt eminence. 'If I have a weakness, it is for a half-timbered house. I could close my eyes and dream æsthetic dreams of future bliss, were I the owner of yon paradise.'

He closed his eyes as he spoke; while Trevor laughed at this simulated ecstasy. It was not a particularly brilliant or humorous remark, but anything was better than the awkward silence caused by Decie's impulsive words. But in reality the wily Denton was lost in no earthly paradise; he was racking his brains to discover the mystery underlying Phil's emphatic utterance. The spectacle presented at this point by an elderly gentleman in a tweed shooting-cap and waders wielding a salmon rod at the head of a broad stream was hailed by all three as a positive relief to the feeling of constraint which had fallen upon them.

'If I was a betting man,' Bertie cried with suppressed excitement, 'I should make a small wager that is Colonel Scobell.'

Decie turned his eyes in the direction of the fisherman. A few powerful strokes brought them nearer. 'It is the Colonel. What brings him here?' he said.

'Any sport, Colonel?' cried Trevor in his audacious style.—'How do they die?'

Colonel Scobell, in the act of making a cast, paused, and got his 'butcher' hopelessly entangled in the willows behind. Denton steered the boat to the side; and the old Crimean hero stood knee deep in the rushing stream, offering a sinewy brown hand to each of the watermen in turn.

'You are a nice lot of fellows to come into my neighbourhood without letting me know,' he exclaimed. 'Explain yourselves.'

'Now, mark the pride of the man!' said Denton oracularly. 'His neighbourhood! Think of it! And only last year he had the audacity to use the same expression, which—correct me if I am wrong—included the whole of the Thames valley.'

The Colonel explained that he had taken for the summer months the mansion which had so excited the last speaker's envy. It struck the kind-hearted warrior, directly he had heard the wanderers' plans, that it would be a good joke to take them all up to Pencraig, as the house was termed, and keep them there for a few days. And knowing from old experience that any argument with one of the grandest of nature's gentlemen would be so much wasted time, they accepted the offer with something akin to gratitude.

Without waiting for his rod, the Colonel led the way up the rocky path, leaving Phil to arrange some little matters connected with the boat. Ten minutes later, as he turned to follow,

the bushes parted, and a figure with nether limbs clad in knickerbockers and a straw hat perched upon his head stood before him. The new-comer eyed Decie with a peculiar glance, in which fear and deference, defiance and mistrust, were strangely mingled. Phil recoiled as one does instinctively from a noxious animal, though the individual before him was neither unpleasant nor repulsive to the view.

'What, in the name of all that's evil, brings you here?' he cried.—'Look here, Rashleigh: I don't want to do anything unpleasant, for the sake'—

'Oh, drop that,' cried the other doggedly. 'The fact is I am staying here with Scobell; and when I met the other fellows, I thought I would run down and warn you I was here. You needn't make it unpleasant for Beatrice, if you do for me.'

'Beatrice! Is she here too?'

'That's just what I came to tell you. If you mind'—

'Of course I mind,' said Phil, with a deep sternness which would have astonished Denton had he but seen it. 'Do you think I would have come, had I known? If you had a spark of manliness, you could put a stop to all this misery and trouble.'

NEW MOTIVE POWER FOR SHIPS.

THE steady progress which is being made in mechanical science has received another illustration by a novel method of propelling ships which has just been submitted to the naval profession. The representative of this new type of vessel is the *Zephyr*, the second of its kind, which has been constructed from the designs of Mr A. F. Yarrow, of Messrs Yarrow & Company, the well-known firm of torpedo-boat builders of Poplar, London, and which was brought under the notice of the Institution of Naval Architects at its recent meeting.

The construction of the vessel differs very little from steam-launches, except that the machinery is placed right at her stern, whilst the fuel is carried in a tank in her bows, the intervening space being reserved for passengers, cargo, &c. It is in connection with the propulsion of the boat that a new departure has been taken, the fuel used being a highly volatile hydrocarbon, one of the early products in the distillation of petroleum, having a specific gravity of from 0.725 to 0.73. This liquid is an article of commerce in the United States, and can be purchased there at the rate of fivepence per gallon. The novelty of its application is that the vapour of this hydrocarbon is made to serve at the same time as the fuel and propelling agent. As to the *Zephyr*, this vessel is thirty-six feet in length by six feet beam, and is built of steel. The hull weighs fourteen hundredweight and the machinery six hundredweight, making a weight of one ton. There is nothing in the construction of the hull which calls for special remark; nor is the propelling machinery—an ordinary direct-acting inverted engine provided with the usual link-motion, feed-pumps, &c.—of an exceptional type.

It is the mode of feeding and actuating the engine alone which strikes us as novel. It is fed by a vapour-generator situated immediately aft of the engine. The generator is a copper coil

enclosed within a double sheet-iron casing, the intermediate space between these two casings being filled with asbestos. Below the coil is an iron pipe, bent into the form of a ring, perforated with holes, and arranged, as in a Bunsen burner, in such a manner that a mixture of hydrocarbon and air can be forced into it, and ignited on issuing through the holes. As has been stated, the tank for holding the liquid fuel is placed in the bow compartment of the boat. It is of copper, air-tight, and of forty gallons capacity. Care is taken that the bulkhead aft of it is perfectly water-tight, so as to avoid any possibility of the liquid finding its way into the central portion of the boat. This tank is placed in communication with the feed-pumps of the engine by means of a pipe passing outside the boat near to the keel; the feed-pumps delivering into the bottom of the vapour-generator. There are two hand-pumps, one on the port and the other on the starboard side. By working the port pump, which has its suction in connection with the tank, its delivery joining the delivery-pipe from the pumps on the engine, the hydrocarbon is drawn from the tank and forced into the bottom of the coil. The starboard pump forces air into the top of the tank; the air becomes charged with vapour, and passes back through a pipe carried along the gunwale to a supplementary burner placed below the vapour-generator, and arranged to ignite the main burner immediately it comes into operation.

In order to start the launch, the air-pump on the starboard side is first worked by hand; and as soon as the air charged with vapour finds its way to the supplementary burner, it is ignited by means of a taper, and heats the copper coil. The air-pump is maintained steadily working for from two to six minutes, according to the temperature of the coil and its surroundings. When the copper coil has in this manner been warmed up, a few smart strokes are made with the hand-pump on the port side, and the liquid from the tank is forced into the coil. The gauge indicating the pressure within the coil immediately rises rapidly, and then a communication is made by opening a valve in a pipe connecting the upper part of the coil with the main burner, allowing a small quantity of the vapour to pass into the burner, together with a requisite amount of air, which is drawn in with it, and on issuing from the holes is immediately ignited.

When this has been fairly started, the air-pump is not further needed, and so long as the pressure is maintained in the coil the flame will continue. The engine can now be started, the main feed-pumps at once taking the place of the hand feed-pump, which can be stopped. From this moment, the action throughout is automatic, and continues as long as the supply of liquid in the tank lasts, which is stated to be about thirty hours, the consumption being about a gallon and a quarter per hour. When once started, neither engine nor what is described as the boiler requires any further attention. Experience has shown that the launch can be run at a speed of from seven to eight miles an hour for several hours without any attention whatever being required, excepting occasionally lubricating the bearings. The working pressure can be easily maintained at about seventy pounds per square inch. On leaving the engine, the exhaust-vapour passes into two con-

densing pipes, placed one on each side of the keel, where it is condensed, and forced by the engine back into the tank, where it arrives in its original fluid form.

It will be seen from this brief description that there are several important points in which this system—which, we understand, is the invention of a foreign engineer, and has been worked into practical shape by Mr A. F. Yarrow—is superior to steam. The fuel-supply requires no attention until that stored in the tank is used up, being perfectly self-acting, all hand-firing being abolished. Owing to the absence of coal, the whole arrangement is very cleanly. Moreover, one person, with ease and comfort, can take charge both of the arrangement of the machinery and steering. To stop the boat, all that is necessary is to cut off the supply of vapour, and no further attention is required. As will further be seen from the description given, the vapour consumed is practically that which goes to the burner, since that which performs work in the engine is exhausted into the condensing pipes running along the bottom of the boat, and is forced back to the tank, to be used over and over again, the only consumption taking place at the burner heating the coil. There are, however, other important advantages attaching to the system. It has been found that on an average, in this climate, the time required to start the launch at full speed, from lighting up, does not exceed five minutes. Owing to the comparatively small space occupied by fuel, generator, and machinery, the central portion of the vessel is available for carrying purposes, and may be roughly estimated as not far from being doubled, as compared with steam. There is a very large saving in weight of machinery, owing to the small size of the vapour-generator, which is so light that two men can easily lift it. This reduction in weight renders lighter scantling of hull admissible, which is apparent from the fact that the launch (thirty-six feet long) with machinery complete weighs only one ton. All the points mentioned will make it evident that in the *Zephyr* we have a new type of vessel which promises well.

It is the intention, we understand, to apply the principle first to launches, torpedo-boats, and other small craft; but as experience ripens, its application to large vessels is a contingency which may be looked forward to. Whatever its ultimate measure of success may be, we may be sure that, in the hands of an experienced shipbuilder like Mr Yarrow, the invention bids fair to cause a revolution in marine propulsion.

THE HUMOURS OF GASOPOLIS.

'Now, in the reign of Victoria, Queen over Britannia, there were in that city which is called Gasopolis many great and mighty scribes.' So runs the Chronicle of Gasopolis as published in its official organ, *The Lighthouse*.

It matters little where Gasopolis is situated: suffice it to say it is in the Emerald Isle, and that the function of its inhabitants, as described in the Chronicle, is 'to enlighten the habitation of the people and keep their lamps burning.' As for *The Lighthouse*, few outside the city have heard of

it; not on account of its inferiority to other journals, but on account of its publication in manuscript form, and therefore never exceeding a circulation of one. Thinking that a smattering of its contents might be appreciated by a larger circle of readers, its editor has put together a few of its 'official anecdotes' in a connective form; and he gives the result to the public with the assurance that whatever he may state is the 'plain unvarnished' truth.

A scribe in Gasopolis has many opportunities of studying his fellow-mortals. All sorts and conditions of men pass before him daily; and, to a person who can appreciate unconscious humour, the study of the working-classes affords an endless source of pleasure. I say 'working-classes' advisedly; for it is only among such that I have found unconscious humour. Education has done and is doing much for mankind; but it destroys that delightful blundering—that 'touch of nature' which 'makes the whole world kin'; and it is surely a wise arrangement of Providence that all men cannot be scholars, else our earth would lose that 'boundless laughter' which brightens life.

To describe the official machinery of Gasopolis is not within the province of this article; but to give connection to my remarks it will be necessary to mention some of the functions of the various officials. And first, there is the scribe who receives the application for gas, or notice to stop the supply, and attends to all complaints in reference to bad lighting, defective meters, and the like.

In taking an application, we require the signature of the applicant; and the apostles of compulsory education would have a strong point in favour of their system, if they had an opportunity of entering Gasopolis and witnessing a few *His Mark* applications. I believe there is not a class of greater hypocrites under the sun than the persons who can't write. I have witnessed a good many signatures in my time; and I can confidently state that the majority of *His* or *Her Mark* individuals, rather than confess their ignorance, resort to mean excuses; such as: 'Ah, just do it yourself; I came away and forgot my glasses, and I can't see a thing without them;' or: 'You can write for me; my hands are so cold I couldn't hold the pen.' I remember accidentally testing an applicant who made the latter excuse, by touching his hand with my little finger as he made his mark, and his hand was quite hot.

It was while attempting to sign his name to an application form that a man uttered a statement which, if it became generally applicable, would considerably affect the sale of soap; and would tax Messrs Pears's ingenuity to the utmost to invent an advertisement which would have the desired effect on the wearers of eyeglasses. The man referred to, before signing his name, endeavoured to fix a somewhat ponderous black-rimmed eyeglass on his right eye;

but each time he bent his head to write the glass fell. Being accompanied by a woman, who was watching him with evident interest, and feeling that some explanation was necessary, he turned to her and remarked in a confidential manner: 'As sure as ivir I wash my face, I can't get the glass to stick on.'

Remarks on our personal appearance are sometimes made by kindly disposed persons. One old gentleman, a tailor by trade, once gave us a short history of a knight who was at that time in a high position in the town. 'I remember him,' he said, 'coming to town a pale, sickly youth, just like that young man'—and he pointed to me—'and look what he is now! How did he rise to such a position?—By passiverence!—And what I say to you, young man, is, passivere! and there's nothing to hinder you from becomin' as great as he is.' I hope he spoke the truth.

There are some humorous mistakes made in giving notice to take the indication of the meter and stop the supply. Mrs Malaprop herself never said anything better than the anxious-looking little fellow who remarked: 'Please, sir, my da sent me down to see if you wud send a man up to take the indignation of the meter.'

Complaints are numerous in Gasopolis as well as other places; and some individuals have a very graphic way of describing what is wrong. 'Bad light' is one of the most frequent causes of complaint; and women are the most eloquent complainers. A strong-minded-looking female once marched over to me and remarked: 'I dunno what we're goin' to do wi' thon gas of ours! No sooner do we put a light to it than it jist pluffs out among our hands.'—On another occasion, one of the same sex, though cast in a gentler mould, remarked: 'I came to tell you that there's somethin' wrong with our gas. It flutters, you know; blinks a kine o' way.'—But the best and fullest description of 'bad light' was given by a determined-looking woman who uttered something like the following: 'The leadin' main-pipe comin' in from the leadin' street is corrupted. We have no light satisfaction. The pipe's corrupted, the gas-fitter says. It doesn't do, you know, when you're shavin' or hair-dressin', to have the gas jumpin' up and down. You needn't send a man to blow down the pipe, for there was three very respectable men up the last time, and they blowed down the pipe; but it didn't do any better. The pipe's corrupted.' And with the reiteration of the pipe's 'corruption' she stopped, and I was not sorry, for it takes a great deal of self-command to avoid smiling in a case like that.

Thus far I have dealt with one department of the business; but the humour is not all confined to it. At the 'place for the receipt of custom' (*vide* Chronicle) many a remark is made worthy of record; and again the gentler sex have rather the best of it. One middle-aged woman who was paying an account got a three-penny piece with a hole in it in her change. She ferreted it out and returned it with the remark: 'That's a very scrupulous thrupenny bit. I'm afraid they won't take it, they're so scrupulous.'

The misuse of a word is again illustrated by the complaint of a woman about the amount of her husband's account. She said she couldn't understand how his account was so large. 'It's

a small shop, that shuts at seven o'clock; and if you look back, you'll not find such an account either summer or winter.' The scribe in attendance tried to reason with her, but he was completely vanquished when she exclaimed: 'It must be too large; for the equalisation of last quarter was the same.'

There is nothing makes a man look so ridiculous as a 'dhrop too much of the crathur'; and there is nothing makes a man so vehement in the expression of his loyalty to Queen and country as this same beverage, if there is any outward occurrence to give him a starting-point. It happened that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales was visiting a city not a thousand miles from Gasopolis; his movements were attracting a great deal of attention in the local press; and no doubt the man who uttered the following sentiments was well read in all the news. He was pretty 'far gone' as he marched into the office and made straight for one of the 'receivers of custom.' When he had got in front of him, he drew his right hand up to his face, and placing his forefinger on his nose, remarked: 'The Prince of Wales is as dacent a subject as ivir you travelled under!' This emphatic way of opening the conversation took the scribe a good deal by surprise; but his surprise gradually changed to amusement as the impressive stranger continued: 'Queen Victoria's as good as gold! I'll bate you my life the Prince is a gentleman ivry inch of him! I'll stand on principle he's travellin' on his ma's business!'—and so on; stopping a little between each statement to help it out with an extra pressure on his nose; till he wound up his loyal sentiments by declaring, 'The Old Woman's the best of the lot of them!'

But we needn't go outside Gasopolis for unconscious humour. We have a labourer with a name which no one, least of all himself, knows how to spell. He was doing something against the law of the land one day, and a policeman collared him. His offence was not of such a heinous nature as to lodge him in prison, but the keeper of the peace decided that his name should be taken. So he produced his note-book and pencil and asked the man his name. The man gave it to him, and the policeman looked doubtful. 'How do you spell it?' he asked.—'You don't spell it at all,' replied the man; 'you jist put it down.' And as the policeman found a difficulty in doing so, the man was let off.

Another character about the place is 'Gentleman James,' the window-cleaner. How he got the name, I don't know, but it may have arisen from his fondness for talking about the time he was servant to the 'beeship.' We never could find out where he lived; and if we wanted him particularly, we were 'jist to send word to the corner-house,' which happens to be a public-house; and therein lies the weak point of 'Gentleman James's' life. His conversation is at all times most interesting and amusing; and he has a sly cynical way of giving a dig, which rarely fails to provoke a laugh. The scribes were in the habit of playing tricks on him by hiding his cloths, &c.; and when he had succeeded in finding the lost articles, he would make such remarks as: 'A man's position in life is no guarantee: if he's a thief in his heart, he'll steal;' at the same time drawing attention to the supposed

culprit. At another time he would say: 'Presbyterians are as a rule uncivilised; but'—(naming the offending scribe, who happens to belong to that body) 'is the worst case ivir I saw.'

OUR LEGAL FUTURE.

No doubt shortly the public will have the opinions of some of the highest legal authorities on both sides of a question which is of such great importance to the community at large—namely, the fusion of the two branches of the law; and considering the interest which is shown every day as to its desirability, we think that it may not be out of place to analyse what the proposed change really means. Lawyers' bills have always been a bone of contention to those who are unfortunate enough to have to pay them. We have all heard of the client who, when asked by his lawyer to name any particular item in his bill to which he took objection, replied, that 'he could not discuss items, but that it was the *whole* which was objectionable;' and certainly we can understand the reason of his reply. If by fusion the interests of the public are preserved, whilst their pockets are saved, no reasonable person ought, from any sentimental feelings of conservatism, to oppose such a desirable change.

The examinations which have to be passed by those who wish to enter upon a legal career are very different. Those for solicitors are the harder of the two; and the apprenticeship is not only longer, but more expensive. Why this is so, it is difficult at first sight to understand; but the reason may perhaps be gathered from the fact that a barrister who has neither ability nor industry never rises beyond a certain position, whatever interest he may have to push him forward. He therefore owes his success not to the knowledge which he gains by passing an examination, but to his individual efforts. If the proposed fusion takes place, there will doubtless be one examination for all; and the prizes and scholarships will be more equally distributed. This, however, is not of much importance; but there is another change which might be more seriously felt—we allude to the manufacture of legal literature. It is well known that the majority of law-books are written by barristers, who have not only more leisure, but greater opportunities, for the production of such works. Scores of young men at the bar have too much time on their hands; and they are only too glad to occupy themselves, whether profitably or not, with work which may be of use to them in the future. Law-books are more often written for fame than gain, and there are several instances in which young men owe their reputation to the choice of a lucky subject and a well-written book; whereas solicitors, having no such opportunities, owing to the different nature of their duties, cannot give up their time to such a purpose; and it is hard to conceive who, under the proposed system, will be found to write books of such a nature. Moreover, the circulation of law-books is extremely limited, as opposed to other kinds of literature; and few would be found who could make a living by writing them, even in the case of the most successful law-book writers of the present day.

The all-important advantage, however, to the

public will be, that clients will be able to see and consult their solicitor-advocates about their cases. We will give an instance of how matters stand at the present day. A client goes to his solicitor and states his case, for which he is charged a fee; the solicitor then goes to a barrister and has a 'conference' with him, for which a second fee is charged; then, if there is a 'leader' in the case, a 'consultation' is required, and for this a third fee is charged. If the client were enabled to see his advocate direct, one, if not two, of these fees would be saved. Again, before the case comes on for hearing in court, it is necessary for the barrister to be furnished with a full copy of the pleadings, proofs of witnesses, and facts of the case. This constitutes his 'brief,' without which he would be hopelessly at sea. All this means expense, an expense which is often grudged by the client, and which under the fusion would not practically be required. The solicitor-advocate, having gone through the case from its commencement, ought to be in full possession of the facts, and would not require anything for his guidance beyond his own notes whilst arguing the case in court. Of course, if a 'leader' were engaged, a brief would still be necessary; and this luxury would be solely for the client's consideration.

Another result of the change would be that legal partnerships would probably contain many more members than they do at present. The leading firms of London solicitors are usually composed as follows: one partner and his clerks do the Conveyancing work; a second undertakes the Chancery work; whilst a third takes in hand the Common Law. Moreover, there are other special subjects which might require special partners; for instance, Patent, Admiralty, and Ecclesiastical cases, without mentioning more. It will not be very easy to guess which branch of the profession will suffer or gain most by the proposed change: but at all events, the future of a junior barrister is becoming year by year so much less hopeful, that this fact alone will render him less averse to the contemplation of an attack upon his vested interests.

TWILIGHT.

TO L. L. D.

DREAM-HALLOWED HOUR! when drifting dusk and shade
Roll from the dying glory of the west;
And shadows woven in the caverned breast
Of yonder beacon, lengthen down the glade!
From beck and mere the mirror'd glories fade;
And mother-souls, secure in fold and nest,
Gather their sleepy murmurs into rest
Of yielded limbs and silence. Dimly arrayed
In dusk and silver of the night, and fair
With lily-stars, the daughter of the day—
Trails of the sunlight in her floating hair,
And tender gleam of reverie, in gray
Of limpid eyes—has borne our fevered care
For one brief hour of dream and shadow-away.

C. A. DAWSON.

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